

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8427

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 1413

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, OVIP, TS

SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA;
VISITS OF NOUIRA AND BOURGUIBA JR

REF: A. STATE 50847; B. TUNIS 0954

1. UPON RECEIPT OF REFTEL A, EMBASSY TRANSLATED MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT FORD TO PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA INTO FRENCH AND DELIVERED IT BY HAND TO OFFICE OF CHEDLI KLIBI, MINISTER-DIRECTOR OF PRESIDENT'S OFFICE. AMBASSADOR SUBSEQUENTLY SPOKE ON TELEPHONE TO KLIBI, WHO HAD NOT YET RECEIVED TEXT OF MESSAGE FROM AMBASSADOR HEDDA AND WAS PLEASED TO HAVE OUR TRANSLATION SO PROMPTLY.

2. FOLLOWING DAY, MARCH 8, AMBASSADOR MET WITH FOREIGN MINISTER CHATTI, WHO HAD BY THAT TIME RECEIVED TEXT OF MESSAGE FROM HEDDA. CHATTI INFORMED ME THAT PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA IMMENSELY PLEASED THAT PRESIDENT FORD CAN RECEIVE PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA IN WASHINGTON MAY 1 AND CONFIRMED THAT THIS DATE IS APPROPRIATE. LATER HABIB BOURGUIBA JR REITERATED TO ME PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA'S PLEASURE WITH THIS DEVELOPMENT. BOURGUIBA JR SAID THAT HIS FATHER WANTS TO ENHANCE NOUIRA'S STATURE IN INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, KNOWING THAT HE WILL BE AROUND A LOT LONGER THAN PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA HIMSELF.

3. I DISCUSSED BOURGUIBA JR'S VISIT TO US IN MY MARCH 8
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MEETING WITH CHATTI, NOTING THAT PRESIDENT FORD'S LETTER

TO PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA, TOGETHER WITH FIXING OF DATE FOR NOUIRA VISIT, SEEMS TO LESSEN URGENCY OF PLANNED BOURGUIBA JR VISIT TO WASHINGTON. CHATTI REPLYED THAT AMBASSADOR HEDDA HAD MADE SIMILAR OBSERVATION TO HIM AND THAT HE HAD PASSED HEDDA'S OBSERVATION ALONG TO PRESIDENT. I NOTED, IN ANY CASE, THAT DEPT IS DISCUSSING MATTER WITH AMBASSADOR HEDDA. (MORNING MARCH 9 AMBASSADOR ACCOMPANIED BOURGUIBA JR TO PLANE WHICH CARRYING HIM TO LONDON, AT WHICH TIME NO FURTHER MENTION MADE OF POSSIBLE CALL BY HIM ON PRESIDENT FORD. NEVERTHELESS, BOURGUIBA JR STILL ARRIVING WASHINGTON MARCH 11 AND STILL HOPES TO SEE HIGH LEVEL OFFICIAL MARCH 13).

4. DURING MEETING WITH CHATTI MARCH 8, HE ASKED ME WHETHER I HAD ANY FURTHER GUIDANCE RE PROPOSAL TO SYNCHRONIZE FIRST JOING COMMISSION MEETING WITH NOUIRA'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON. I SAID I HAD NO NEW GUIDANCE BUT NOTED THAT WASHINGTON HAD ORIGINALLY PROPOSED HOLDING FIRST MEETING AT TIME OF ANTICIPATED VISIT TO WASHINGTON BY PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA. I HAD SINCE RECEIVED INFORMAL INDICATION THAT WASHINGTON MIGHT PREFER THAT FIRST MEETING BE PRO FORMA BUT THAT I WAS SEEKING CLARIFICATION.

5. COMMENT: RE JOINT COMMISSION, SUGGEST THAT RATHER THAN HOLDING PRO FORMA MEETING ON OCCASION NOUIRA VISIT, WE CONFINE OURSELVES TO FORMAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF ESTABLISHMENT OF JOINT COMMISSION AT THAT TIME, INCLUDING PERHAPS CEREMONY DURING WHICH TWO SIDES AFFIX SIGNATURES TO DOCUMENT FORMALLY ESTABLISHING COMMISSION. FIRST FULL-FLEDGED MEETING COULD THEN BE HELD IN FALL EITHER HERE OR IN WASHINGTON. BELIEVE WE NEED MORE TIME THAN THAT CURRENTLY AVAILABLE TO PROPERLY PLAN FOR FIRST FULL-FLEDGED MEETING.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: REQUEST (1) INDICATION OF WHAT ELSE DEPT HAS IN MIND FOR PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA'S VISIT AND HOW MANY DAYS HE WILL BE GUEST OF USG IN WASHINGTON (ASSUME FROM PARA 4 REFTTEL A CONFIDENTIAL

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THAT MAY 1 BEING RESERVED FOR TWO WHITE HOUSE SESSIONS); AND (2) EXPRESSION OF WASHINGTON'S LATEST VIEWS REGARDING TIMING AND NATURE OF FIRST JOINT COMMISSION MEETING.
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